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Japanese hobby culture

WEEKLY

# RAIJIN

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# GAME & ANIME



**STRAIGHT FROM  
NIPPON!**

ISSUE  
11

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HAS FINALLY HIT  
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# RAIJIN G&A

issue **11**

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## COVER STORY

What is it about this picture that just puts our minds at ease? Hitomi, who left a dazzling first impression with her presence in "DOA3," gives us yet another reason to live with this fly summer get-up in **DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball**, covered in this week's Special Feature on gal games. Check it out – for your own sake!



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# GAL GAMES

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**SPECIAL  
FEATURE**

# Gal Games: Otaku Incarnate

**A THOROUGH LOOK AT THIS PROSPEROUS  
AND PECULIAR FORM OF VIDEO  
ENTERTAINMENT IN JAPAN**

## WHAT ARE "GAL GAMES?"

The origins and evolution of that genre of video games known as "gal games" can be traced to Japan, where they are most commonly referred to by the *otaku* that enjoy them as *gyaruge*. Unlike other categories of games with a more-or-less fixed style of gameplay, such as RPGs, real-time strategy-based titles and flight simulators, the one universal thread present throughout gal games is the appearance of a myriad of female characters. Most of these titles have a tendency to incorporate love-simulation elements as well.

Given, then, this somewhat free definition of

what gal games are, it suffices to say that they take all kinds of different forms. However, fans of the genre go out of their way to distinguish their favorite game category from those that, from an objective perspective, aren't much different. Character games, for example, are specifically referred to as such due to their popularity rising from the originality of the various characters within the game.

Furthermore, despite also being centered on female characters, *hentai*-style game titles are a completely different breed – or so claim fans of gal games, anyway. Again, to the untrained eye, it's truly hard to tell the difference.

## THE HISTORY OF GAL GAMES

The current proliferation of gal games in Japan, largely defined by the simulation of romantic situations incorporated within them, essentially has its roots in Konami's 1995 best-

selling PlayStation hit *Tokimeki Memorial*, a port of the PC Engine (the short-lived TurboGrafx-16 in the West) original released a year earlier. It's safe to say that up until *Tokimeki*, there were no titles for console use that focused on such romantic encounters with a variety of females. Although *hentai* games for PCs had been available for sometime prior, computer games at the time were largely entertainment enjoyed by only hardcore users, thus keeping *hentai* and their kind low-profile until *Tokimeki* blew up on the console scene.

Prior to Konami's aforementioned hit, there were practically no titles incorporating romantic simulation and other elements that typify the gal games of today. There were, however, a number of titles that were brought to the forefront based on the popularity of their female characters – the first of these being Telnet Japan's "The Phantasm Soldier Valis," originally released as a PC game in 1986. The adventures of Yuko, Reiko and the other "gals" in this title garnered the "Valis" series

## The Gal Game Hall of Fame: **Entry 1** **Tokimeki Memorial** **THE MOTHER OF ALL GAL GAMES**



As mentioned on the prior page, *Tokimeki Memorial* was originally released as a Super CD-ROM for the classic PC Engine platform in May of 1994. Considered revolutionary at the time, its combination of a growth simulator in trying to elevate the parameters of the main character and romantic

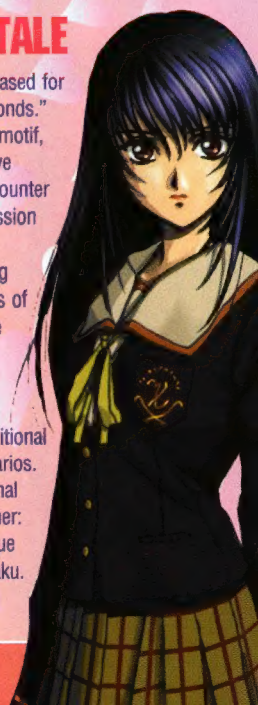
elements in trying to engage in relationships with multiple female companions was the first of its kind. As the PC Engine was more a hardcore than mainstream choice as a gaming platform, the series didn't benefit from the recognition it deserved until the initial title's release on the more widespread PlayStation platform the following year under the title *Tokimeki Memorial: Forever with You*. Original Planner: Kokura Masatoshi.

## The Gal Game Hall of Fame: **Entry 2** **Kuon no Kizuna** **AN EPIC AND MOVING TALE**

The title of this novel adventure game title released for the PlayStation in 1998 translates into "Eternal Bonds." With the cycle of rebirth and reincarnation as its motif, *Kuon No Kizuna* paints the grand story of the love between a man and woman who continue to encounter each other throughout their various lives. Progression of this story is determined step by step by the choices made by the player in the form of reading dialog and selecting corresponding answers. Fans of *Kuon* were attracted not only to the main heroine Mayou but also to the various sub-heroines appearing throughout the game. Subsequent versions of the title on the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 benefited from the inclusion of additional



scenarios.  
Original  
Planner:  
Kishiue  
Daisaku.





# ...Gal Games and Hentai: The Difference...

"Hentai games" is the general term used to describe that category of adult-oriented game titles largely available for PC only. This genre is also often referred to in Japan as *eroge*, short for "erotic games." As made evident by the category name, these games are characterized by their placing the members of their largely-female casts into a number of sexual situations, which right there places them on a different level than the romantic conversation-based nature of the majority of gal games. Eliminate these sex scenes, however, and you'll have something that more or less approaches a gal game.

Oddly enough, a number of *hentai* games that have had the erotic scenes removed from them in this manner have in fact been released on console, having been casually relabeled as gal games. Even more ironic is that a large percentage of recently popular gal game titles have their roots in *hentai*. To be

sure, from a business standpoint, simply porting an already-completed *eroge* rather than creating a new console title from scratch vastly reduces the amount of time, money, and effort on promotion required.

At the current stage, gal games and *hentai* titles are still viewed as representing different genres. However, recent leaps in console technology coupled with the now-mainstream use of computers as a gaming tool may serve to significantly reduce the gap between gal and *hentai* games in the future.

A significantly large number of PC games originally unavailable to minors have seen release on console in recent years.



significant popularity. The following year subsequently saw the release on PC of what is considered to be a monumental work in the action game genre, "Ys" by Nihon Falcom. Based on the strong following generated by the title's heroine Fina, "Ys" was ported to just about every platform from the Famicom (NES) and PC Engine to the Sega Saturn. Yuko, Fina and the like represented the earliest examples of game heroines whose popularity outgrew that of the games featuring them in the first place, and can undoubtedly be considered the ancestresses of the female leads of gal games today.

## THE GENERAL TAKE ON GAL GAMES

The range of gal games available for purchase in Japan borders on the phenomenal, with particularly popular titles selling upwards of several hundred thousand

units. However, the positive sales of these titles do not necessarily reflect the general sentiment that surrounds them.

For all of the fans of gal games in Japan, there are non-fans that find the concept of actually being able to feel love for the games' computer-generated heroines a ludicrous one. Such adventure games primarily centered on said romantic encounters are often sharply criticized, with this criticism also based on the sentiment that games falling in this category are barely distinguishable from each other. As there is no escaping the fact that the aspect most emphasized in gal games is the visuals of the characters, this translates into the gameplay itself taking the backseat in most regards, leading to gaming enthusiasts to often dismiss the genre altogether.

On top of this, there is a tendency within the gaming population in Japan to maintain a general dislike of gal game enthusiasts. The prejudice often following such fans of the genre is that of an unkempt, almost "slob-

like" *otaku*. Furthermore, these fans are known to talk incessantly about their favorite titles whenever given the chance. With this degree of image discrimination against players of gal games, one can be sure that there is a large number of closet fans. It goes without saying, however, that a great deal of these users do not fit the negative descriptions listed above, which are likely founded on exaggerated images of such fans. At the same time, it will still be some time before the concept of falling in love with a character in a video game reaches a level of acceptance comparable with that given to becoming fascinated with a character appearing in a movie or book.



The Gal Game Hall of Fame: **Entry 3**

## Princess Maker 3 THE PATH TO A PRINCESSDOM

Gainax, the mega-famous animation studio responsible for "Evangelion" and other major works, designed this fantasy-based growth simulation title that was originally released in 1991 for the PC 9801 line of computers. Playing the surrogate father of the heroine, it is your job to properly raise her between the ages of ten and eighteen into a young lady worthy of becoming a princess. While the romantic elements typically present in gal games were not present here, this series from its second installment featured as a potential ending the somewhat amoral scenario of the girl raised eventually becoming the father's bride! Still, this title rarely failed to stir the paternal instincts of the numerous followers it had. Original Planner: Akai Takami.



The Gal Game Hall of Fame: **Entry 4**

## Kita He: White Illumination THE ROMANTIC HUDSON CLASSIC

Hudson Soft's love-adventure game released in 1999, which translates into "To The North," takes place as the title suggests on Hokkaido and the islands off the northernmost tip of Japan. There, the player engages in deep relationships with the various female companions he encounters. Accompanying the typical system of moving conversation along through selecting from the choices of dialog presented is that of opting to interrupt the conversation taking place if the timing is appropriate. With its background graphics based on actual images of Hokkaido, *Kita He* literally gives you the illusion that you are touring Northern Japan. Original Planner: NOCCHI.





# ...The Multifold Evolution of Gal Games...

The widespread activity surrounding gal games defies the simple category of "game" affixed to the genre. Alongside merchandise such as figures and trading cards, popular titles also spawn novel, anime and manga versions, with each one performing well. The success of gal games in expanding into the multimedia front is in fact often greater than that experienced by standard game titles, and is a testament to the exceptional loyalty of enthusiasts to the genre.

In the *dojin* world as well, the success experienced by the series *Tsukihime* ("Moon Princess") in selling several hundred thousand copies over the last several years points to the up-and-coming of the *hentai* game genre as well. It will be interesting to see where the line between the two equally-growing genres of gal and *hentai* games will be drawn in the future.

✓ *Tsukihime*, a novel game title, proved to be a smash *dojin* hit.



>> The TV anime version of *Sister Princess*, which originated as a magazine-based project.



## CATEGORIZING GAL GAMES: ZOKUSEI & MOE

As mentioned in the introduction, a significantly large number of sub-genres falls within the larger genre of gal games. Fans of these games, however, often take the greater liberty of separating them into simpler categories based not on the nature of the gameplay offered (e.g., simulation, action, etc.) but on that of the characters appearing within the game. Here, the words *zokusei* (literally, "attribute," as in the characteristic that defines the characters) and *moe* ("sprout," as in the nature the characters develop) invariably come into play. These expressions are used as a simple means of identifying the situations and characteristics that most commonly rear themselves in gal games. Taking as a specific example the anime *Sister Princess*, in which players form relationships with each of the twelve different younger sisters appearing in the game, fans of this and similar titles would be considered *imoto-zokusei* (*imoto* meaning "younger sister") or *imoto-moe* enthusiasts. However, the variety of characters appearing within gal games does not necessarily

all fall into the same *zokusei* or *moe*, and fans take the additional liberty here of assigning a category to each character in a specific game, with a popularity contest subsequently ensuing between characters within the same *zokusei* or *moe* categories.

The range of different *zokusei* and *moe* is staggering. In addition to the aforementioned *imoto* category, you also have *ane* (older sister), *fujō* (magic-wielding females), *rorikon* (short for "Lolita Complex" in Japanese; refers to female characters with dangerously pedophilic appeal), *elf*, *kyonyu* (big-breasted), *puni* (referring to vivid, graphic depictions of characters with a visual degree of vitality and elasticity reminiscent of that of a baby's skin), *nekomimi* (girls with cat-like ears) – the list is virtually endless. In the same fashion as the *imoto-zokusei/imoto-moe* title *Sister Princess*, games sold as appealing to a segment of fans of a particular *zokusei/moe* are hardly uncommon.

As a side note for you Japanese language enthusiasts, it is believed that the term *moe* was originally a mistaken version of the other *moe* in Japanese meaning "burn," the *kanji* character for the latter having often been mixed up during the time that PC-based communications started to

take off. Since then, however, the "sprout *moe*" has continued to be used intentionally as a kind of *otaku* joke.

## THE FUTURE OF GAL GAMES

With games today featuring *kawaii* characters at every turn, the widespread influence gal games are starting to have on other genres is astounding. However, fans specifically of gal games show a degree of enthusiasm for their hobby unmatched by fans of typical video games, with their passion for the games and the characters appearing within them not unlike that which people often show towards their favorite movie stars or athletes. While this might be a bit of an overstatement, where typical games are something to enjoy when one has free time, gal games and their heroines are viewed as something to aggressively support.

As it has been some time now since anime and anime-style art has achieved recognition overseas, perhaps it won't be long before Western gamers are able to experience this *otaku* passion that their Japanese counterparts have been enjoying for so long.

The Gal Game Hall of Fame:

Entry  
5

## Memories Off

THE PAST REVISITED BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES...



This title, which paints a series of encounters with young females in an everyday high school environment, went on to become a smash hit following its initial release on the PlayStation in 1999, and has increased its fan support with every subsequent port to a platform that includes the Dreamcast and PC versions. A sequel was released in 2001, followed by the final episode in November of last year. Accompanied by a browser version that can be enjoyed on the Net and the availability of a cell phone-compatible version, *Memories Off* is without a doubt at the forefront of the gal game genre. Original Planner: Sasaki Mutsumi.

The Gal Game Hall of Fame:

Entry  
6

## Sister Princess

FIND YOURSELF THE OBJECT OF AFFECTION OF TWELVE SISTERS!

Released in the spring of 2001, *Sister Princess* features a main cast of twelve – all sisters! This love adventure game originally began as a reader participation-based project run by a gaming magazine, but its popularity rose to such heights that a game version was eventually conceived. The novel scenario of having all twelve of the heroines being the player's younger sister left gal game fans astounded, and the characters' attractive, varying personalities succeeded in finding significant popularity. A sequel is scheduled to be released this year. Original Character Design: Tenhiro Naoto.





# New & Upcoming Gal Games 2003!!



New & Upcoming Gal Games

## Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball

**SCORES OF BATHING SUITS AT  
YOUR PERUSAL!**

This beach volleyball spin-off of the popular 3-D head-to-head fighting series of the same name was destined upon its conception to be a hit among fans of **DOA** and especially its female cast. Not only can you enjoy a solid game of volleyball in the title's Game Mode, but you can also gawk at its drop-dead gorgeous participants from a variety of angles using the game's modeling feature. A separate accessory shop complements the startling variety of bathing suits available to dress up your favorite characters before their big match, and combined allow for over 300 different fly combinations. This feature and the aforementioned modeling feature make this title more than just another sports game. Find the hottest combination of summer gear for each of your **DOA** honeys!

This title is being pushed by Tecmo as the industry's first "fantasy sports simulation," and has already succeeded in raising eyes both here in Japan and the U.S. for its provocative, almost gratuitous content. However, the effort put into a fan service title of this magnitude is not something easily overlooked, and from the perspective of male gamers in particular, the femmes of **DOA** are, well, hot!

Soak in the various shots we've provided of the game's beautiful cast here.





## 2 New & Upcoming Gal Games

### Sister Princess 2

#### A FAMILY REUNION WITH TWELVE YOUNGER SISTERS — WHAT'S A BIG BROTHER TO DO?

The sequel to the original mentioned on the previous page brings the player and his twelve younger sisters back for a month together in this romantic adventure. Where the first installment spanned the month following Valentine's Day, this one takes place during the summertime, making for all kinds of fun under the sun. The core of **Sister Princess 2**, which features all of the original sister characters, revolves around the concept of swimming at the sea, and players are allowed to dress each one of the sisters in one of three bathing suits for their excursions to the beach. Images of these sisters wearing the varying bathing suits are displayed throughout the game.

The game progresses through a series of daily conversations and exchanges of e-mail with the sisters, with a series of events leading to the ending for which a specific sister is eventually chosen. **Sister Princess 2** is scheduled for a March 6<sup>th</sup> release.



## 3 New & Upcoming Gal Games

### The Ground Defense Force Mao Chan: "I Protect Japan!"

#### THE POPULAR ANIME HAS FINALLY ARRIVED IN GAME FORM!

Japan finds itself under attack by a horde of *kawaii*, stuffed doll-like but nonetheless hostile aliens. Assembled to drive this threat back into space where it came from is an elite defense force consisting of — elementary school students! The anime **The Ground Defense Force Mao Chan**, which made waves during its TV broadcast run, is on its way to the PlayStation. Assign your force activities and raise the characters' respective parameters in preparation for the game's Battle Mode in which you fend the enemy aliens off! With clips from the original work included within the game, it's bound to feel just like playing the animation. As with similar titles, the nature of the player's progression throughout the game reveals a number of different endings.





## 4 New & Upcoming Gal Games

# Omoide Ni Kawaru Kimi: Memories Off

**BOTH NEW AND RETURNING CHARACTERS MAKE THIS A SEQUEL TO LOOK FORWARD TO!**

The latest installment in the popular love adventure series **Memories Off**, which was even taken up in *Meisaku Gekijo* (a famous review of accomplished works). Three characters from the last two versions — Imasaka Yue and Kirishima Koyomi, the main heroines in the first installment, and Shirakawa Shizuru, the older sister from the second — combine with seven new ones to give this sequel a simultaneously nostalgic and fresh flavor. The game system remains orthodox with its text-based adventure format, and a number of unique scenarios will arise depending on the heroines you run into and your choice of actions within the set story that presents itself in the opening stages of the game. Japanese subtitle: "You Who Will Become a Memory."



## 5 New & Upcoming Gal Games

# Ai Yori Aoshi

**IT'S GREAT TO HAVE YOUR OLD FRIEND BACK — BUT WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIANCÉE?**

First came the manga, then the anime, and now the game version. Utilizing the same graphic staff in charge of the popular TV series, this title looks to be a sure-fire hit among fans of the franchise. Read the text displayed and progress through the two stories in the order offered to you to replay through the one of your choice on your third go-around. Looking to be a highlight of this adventure title is the reproduction of character dialog from the original manga.



## 6 New & Upcoming Gal Games

# Galaxy Angel

**AN XBOX VERSION TO FOLLOW LAST SUMMER'S PC ONE!**

The simulation game made available for the PC last year makes its way to the Xbox with this release. Both are based off the anime, comic and light novel versions of this popular SF spectacular, which follows the main character and the lovely battalion underneath her after she rescues a star child being hunted following a coup d'etat and becomes caught up in the struggle against rebellious forces that ensues. Get acquainted with the various members of the Angel Wing in the adventure sequences and take on the enemy in battle within the simulation bits. Your command skills will be the key in leading the various units of the Angel Force to victory! To accompany the release of **Galaxy Angel** for the Xbox is that of a Windows-compatible collection of desktop accessories based on the series.





ART GALLERY PIECE '7

RAIN GA  
7







# Today's Topics

## Topic #1

### ANIME

## A TIMELESS ANIME RANKING WITH "SPACE CRUISER YAMATO" AND "GUNDAM" IS REVISITED!

**E**ight years after **Neon Genesis Evangelion**'s broadcast, the entire series has been remastered under the supervision of Director Anno Hideaki and rereleased.

A first DVD and CD single will be released on March 26<sup>th</sup>. The DVD will include only the first episode (with video extras), "Neon Genesis Evangelion 01: Test-Type," with the CD single to include the opening and ending theme songs "Zankoku Na Tenshi No Thesis" and "Fly Me To The Moon," respectively. This will be followed by a best album in May and a DVD-Box set (ten disks plus special extras disk) with all episodes, four retakes, and three movies slated to follow in June. In addition to this, two DVDs each including four TV episodes will be released each month from July to October 2003, and the movies will be released on a two-DVD set in November.

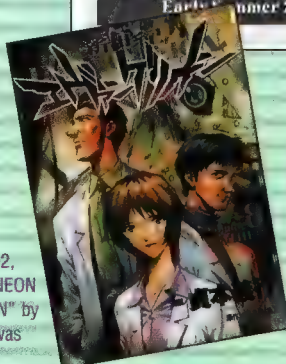
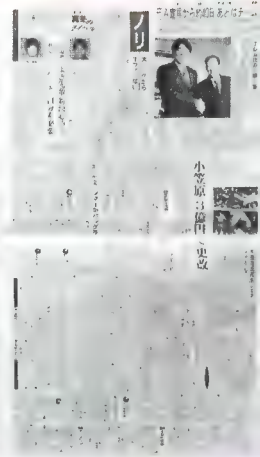
Announcement of the rerelease of the anime was accompanied by that of all the expected release dates (see <http://www.evangelion.co.jp> for details), which gives the impression of a major project that has been given serious prior effort.

Originally, **Evangelion** was an anime broadcast on TV Tokyo-affiliated stations from October 1995 to March 1996, inciting an anime craze after broadcast concluded that many heralded as the return of the glory days of "Space Cruiser Yamato" and "Gundam." The elaborate moviescape by Anno Hideaki and intriguing production values generated numerous followers among anime buffs and the average Taro alike, and the anime left a mark as one of the more influential works in the history of the genre.

**Evangelion** is interlaced with philosophical sub-themes such as life and self-awareness. A number of research and commentary books have been written on the esoteric and mysterious content of the "Dead Sea Scrolls" and the names of the apostles appearing in the work. Overall, the

economic effect associated with the work is said to have reached 20 to 40 billion yen at the time. Incidentally, 1996 is the same year that the Orix Blue Wave, the baseball team that Ichiro, now of the Seattle Mariners, played for, won the Japan Series pennant. The economic effect of their championship run was about 35 billion yen, meaning that a single anime work had a greater economic impact than the championship of a professional baseball team. On top of that, a huge range of publications normally not discussing with anime, from literary to graphic arts to music magazines, ran articles on **Evangelion** from their own unique perspectives. In fact, one magazine aimed at adults that sold all available copies of a particular issue featuring a special on **Evangelion**, for the first time in its publication history went so far as to issued a second printing.

There are lots of developments in the works this year, including news of the return of "Space Cruiser Yamato" and the new Gundam "Seed" series. Just how much of a ripple **Evangelion** will continue to make in this economically-depressed Japan remains to be seen.



On December 19, 2002, The 8<sup>th</sup> volume of "NEON GENESIS EVANGELION" by Sadamoto Yoshiyuki was released

This full-page advertisement ran in the morning edition of a national paper on December 10, 2002.



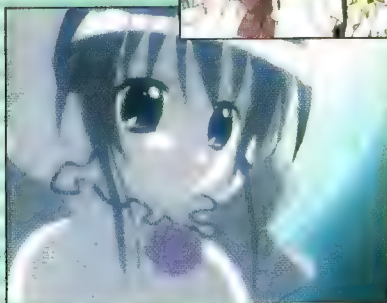
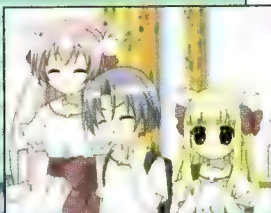
## Topic #2 ANIME

### HAVE PREPACKAGED FIGURES BECOME THE NORM? HIGH-QUALITY DESIGNS CAPTURE FANS!

The cover of RGA #8 was graced by Degi-ko, or DiGiCharat, of **Pita-Ten**, a popular comic created by Koge-Donbo that is serialized in *DengekiComic Gao!* by Media Works. The six independent volumes released so far in this series have sold nearly two million copies in Japan. Higuchi Kotaro, the hero of the story, lost his mother when he was young, and is currently a sixth grader preparing for junior high school entrance exams. A young girl named Misha suddenly makes herself known to Kotaro, who ends up being followed everywhere by this mysterious, enigmatic girl. His humdrum albeit peaceful everyday life is suddenly turned into a fun and more exciting one.

This cute manga, full of charming young female characters, was adapted for the screen as an anime and aired on Japanese TV from April to September 2002. It has also been released on DVD, with plans for the ninth and final DVD to be released on April 25, 2003 (26 episodes in total). The fourth to ninth volumes of the DVD series were simultaneously released in both

standard and limited editions, with the latter coming packaged with a figure (Limited Edition: ¥7,000; Standard Edition: ¥6,000). The figures are designed by Miyagawa Takeshi, who has designed figures of other Koge-Donbo characters in the past, and are of top-notch quality. In particular, the figures come in a wide variety of apparel and sizes, making a complete set ideal for both display and collection purposes.



## Topic #3 ANIME

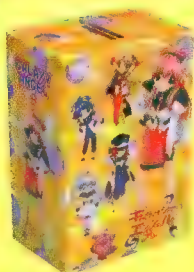
### A "SUPER" LIMITED EDITION? THE LIGHTEARTED ANGELS ARE BACK WITH LOTS OF SPECIAL GOODIES, INCLUDING A T-SHIRT, TEDDY BEAR, AND CD!

Three months after the Angel Wing is disbanded, Commander Volcott is released from duty as the new Galaxy Twinstar Wing is commissioned. Worried about life after retirement, he desperately fights to reorganize the Angel Wing.

As we're sure you're aware from our frequent coverage on the work, **Galaxy Angel** is a popular SF comedy *bishojo* anime. In Japan, the third series began broadcast from October 2002, with one DVD having been released each month since December. Each DVD includes four episodes, and there is a total of twelve available. These DVDs are simultaneously released in both standard and limited editions, the latter of course including a variety of extra merchandise.

Deserving special mention is that the first DVD is available in a Limited Special Edition (¥9,800) to accompany the aforementioned Standard (¥5,800) and Limited (¥6,800) Editions. The Limited Edition release includes a box capable of

storing the first to sixth volumes, a special CD, **Galaxy Angel** pet characters, and a Normad teddy bear (with vibration function). The Limited Special Edition goes even further and includes, in addition to the above, desktop accessories and two T-shirts. Being that it is in its third season, **Galaxy Angel** is even deeper and more fan-orientated than before, a fact underscored by the attractive goodies packed in with the limited editions.





# ANIME FOCUS

アニメフォーカス

## YUKIKAZE

DATA

Publisher ● Bandai Visual  
Format ● DVD  
Price ● ¥5,800

Volume I ● 47 min.  
Release Date ● August 25, 2002

### SUCCESSFUL ANIME CONVERSION OF SF NOVEL MASTERPIECE

Thirty-Three years after the world was rocked by the sudden invasion of an unknown alien life form, mankind takes the battlefield to the skies after identifying a pillar of fog on the edge of Antarctica that represents a direct conduit to the presence of the enemy, subsequently labeled "JAM." With the last line of defense resting in the hands of the heavily-armed and advanced Fairy Air Force (FAF), jet fighters dance in an explosion-lit sky as the fate of the earth below remains in the balance...

This is the premise of *Yukikaze*, the long-awaited anime treatment of the acclaimed SF novel of the same name by author Kambayashi Chohei. As a rendition of the original book and a collaborative work commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of anime studio GONZO and the 20<sup>th</sup> of Emotion, *Yukikaze* is worthy on quite a number of levels.

Getting deeper into the tale that comprises this work, the story centers around the stoic and nonchalant reconnaissance pilot Fukai Rei, whose only spiritual crutch in the midst of a struggle he finds meaningless lies in the advanced fighter craft "Yukikaze" (literally, "Snow Wind") under his command. This is despite the continuous support and assurances

provided to him by superior and close friend Major James Bukhar, who, despite feeling increasingly disillusioned himself, attempts to convince Rei of the weighty role of the FAF and the war at hand. One day following a successfully completed information gathering mission, Rei and his copilot are suddenly attacked by an unidentified aircraft. Ignoring the warnings of his copilot, who tells him not to engage, Rei as always puts his trust in the analysis of Yukikaze's computer, which identifies the aircraft as an enemy. Without hesitation, he engages the aircraft, shooting it out of the sky after an intense dogfight. Following his return to base, he is questioned regarding his actions and the nature of the aircraft. However, the latter remains unclear, and Rei is instead granted a promotion to First Lieutenant following a short R&R period.

On his first mission following his return to duty, Rei comes to heads with the same mysterious aircraft he last encountered, only this time he is attacked with an even greater degree of intensity and firepower. As if sensing the desperate situation at hand, Yukikaze's computer takes control of the aircraft itself — much to the astonishment of Rei. After successfully evading destruction and seemingly eliminating the

airborne threat, Yukikaze returns control to Rei, who is both dazed after his near-death encounter and puzzled as to what has just

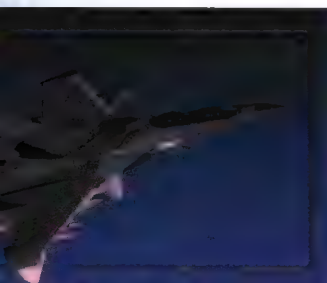


happened. The true power of Yukikaze, the only thing Rei had put his trust in, has started to manifest itself...

This synopsis represents the core of Operation:1, the first volume of the *Yukikaze* animated series. Even without having read the original novel, the depth of the story presented here is readily and immediately apparent, and it will be interesting to see how many Operations the series eventually spans. In terms of production, this work has some of the most seamless blends of CG and hand-drawn animation ever produced, with the presence of CG thankful in this case as it provides for some of the most realistic representations of fighter plans and aerial combat ever seen in an anime. The characters themselves are also presented in a realistic light that makes it easy to identify with their emotions, and the deliberately slow pacing of the piano-laden soundtrack successfully conveys the weight of the story's scenario and the stoicism of its main character Rei. Furthermore, this music along with the anime's phenomenal sound effects are presented in rich Dolby Digital sound to immerse viewers in the world of *Yukikaze* even further.

Operation:2 is scheduled for a February 25<sup>th</sup> release, and an Xbox game based on *Yukikaze* is also rumored to be in the works. Highly recommended.

Written by SHOU.





# MACROSS ZERO

DATA

Publisher • Bandai Visual  
Format • DVD  
Price • ¥5,000

Volume 1 • 30 min.  
Release Date • December 21, 2002

## “WHEN THE BIRD PEOPLE APPEAR ONCE AGAIN, A SONG OF DESTRUCTION WILL BE HEARD...”

Twenty years after the first “Macross” series — admittedly my favorite anime work of all time — was initially broadcast, the creators of the original bring us a third and new chapter in the saga that, while taking place before the adventures of the crew of the SDF-1, take the series to unprecedented visual heights. Personal bias aside, I will say right off the bat that this is one series to look out for this year, particularly if you are a fan of “Macross” and SF anime in general.

The timeline of **MacrossZero** is set prior to the reconstruction of the SDF-1 but after its crashing into the earth in July 1999, which awakened mankind to the presence of alien life. This awakening would lead to a redistribution of power across the globe, subsequently propelling it into war. Participating in this war is our main character Kudo Shin, a young and often risk-taking fighter pilot whose purpose in fighting lies in his self-induced fantasy of restoring the peaceful existence that characterized his childhood.

The first episode of the series, entitled “Umi To Kaze To” (“Both the Sea and Wind”), begins with Shin and his copilot Edgar engaging three hostile aircraft. While the hot-headed antics of Shin allow for the enemy to be disposed of with ease, he is criticized by Edgar and his wingmen for being too trigger-happy. It is there that their carrier Illustoria is attacked, and in the midst of responding to the SOS subsequently sent out, Shin and his wingmen are intercepted by a mysterious red aircraft that fails to appear on their radar screens. This red mechanical wonder quickly eliminates Shin’s wingmen and proceeds to do the same to Shin, who only barely escapes death at the hands of a missile volley. Shin prepares to engage the hostile aircraft when all of a sudden it sprouts a pair of legs and transforms into a robot. The astonished Shin barely has time to utter, “*Hito...*” (“It’s human...”) before his fighter is blown to bits.

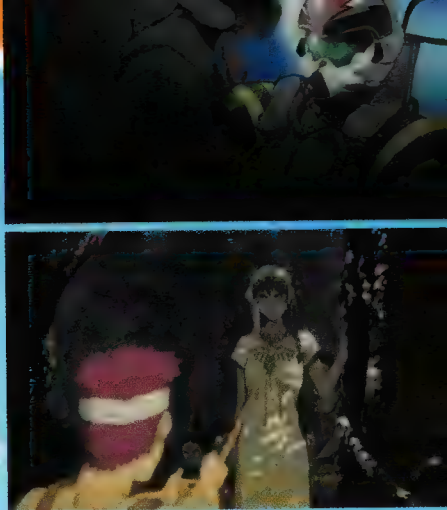
He has just had his first encounter with a Valkyrie.

Shin succeeds in ejecting and wakes up

on the remote island of Mayan, his wounds having been taken care of. There, he encounters a primitive people with strong religious ties to nature and little to no exposure to technology, who inform him that he was the only survivor who was recovered. It is also here that he encounters the intense and deeply spiritual Sara and her spunky little sister Mao, the latter aspiring to the advanced world Shin represents and befriending him right away. The primitive but simple ways of the islanders and their religious explanations of the world around them help Shin to reexamine his own world in a different light as he waits for his wounds to heal. However, it wouldn’t be long before he is thrust back into combat...

Including segments that feature a young Roy Fokker, this is the basic plot of the first installment of **MacrossZero**, with four more episodes scheduled for production. Similar to “Sento Yosei Yukikaze,” also reviewed in this issue, this work is blessed with seamless combinations of beautiful hand-drawn animation and CG. However, where “Yukikaze” goes for realism and subtlety, **MacrossZero** delivers in the intensity department, and fans of the all-out dogfight sequences that serve as the signature of the “Macross” series as a whole will be gaping here. In particular, look out for the last scene featuring one particular fighter...

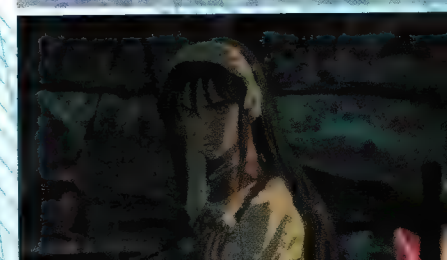
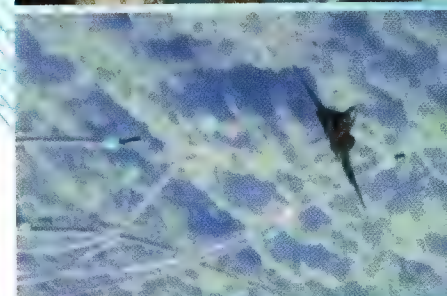
“Macross” enthusiasts are also bound to be pleased by other familiar elements, particularly the appearance of Fokker himself. It’s a treat to hear Fokker call someone, “*sempai*” rather than to be called “*sempai*,” and with lines like, “Fighting your first battle is like making love to a woman for the first time — you can’t be nervous,” you know he hasn’t changed over the years. The importance of relationships between men and women shown in the earlier “Macross” series is also present here in a budding romance between Shin and Sara. Furthermore, with a strong incorporation of religious overtones and spiritual explanations of the chaos afflicting mankind, this series also succeeds in adding even greater depth to the “Macross” saga.



The next title in **Macross Zero**, entitled “Chijō No Hoshi” (“A Star on Earth”), is scheduled to be available in Spring of this year. With “Macross” being a title of major caliber in the West as well, expect to see an English-language version coming your way some time in the near future. This series is not one to miss.

Finally, anime *otaku* should keep their eyes out for the photo of Shin and his dad shown during the flashback at the beginning — Shin’s pops looks strikingly like Steik Bernard from “Mospeada,” doesn’t he? (Hint: “Mospeada,” like the first “Macross” series, was also a Tatsunoko production.)

Written by SHOU.





# GAME FOCUS

▶ ゲームフォーカス ◀

## O•T•O•G•I

DATA

Publisher ● FROM SOFTWARE

Developer ● FROM SOFTWARE

Platform ● Xbox

Genre ● 3-D Japanese-Style Action/RPG

Release Date ● December 12, 2002 (In Japan) Price ● ¥6,800

### THE XBOX GETS YET ANOTHER AAA TITLE IN JAPAN

Being my turn up at bat for this week's Game Focus, I can't help but be a little bit pleased by the timing, and on a couple of levels at that. First of all, as a game reviewer, I always find it a satisfying experience to have the honor of reviewing two killer titles in a row, the first being "Tekki" by Capcom. Furthermore, this is the second consecutive title I've reviewed for the Xbox, the underdog platform in Japan that I am recently starting to see as the definitive console to own this generation. On top of providing groundbreaking entertainment like "Tekki" and the closest thing to controlling an SF action flick in Microsoft/Bungie's "HALO," the Xbox recently can be credited with providing titles that bring back the awe, simplicity and coolness factor that hooked us onto games to begin with while simultaneously raising the bar for technical and creative presentation in a video game. SEGA's "Panzer Dragoon ORTA" was the first of these kinds of titles to do this, and now, **O•T•O•G•I** is the second.

This title from FROM SOFTWARE, whose mech-shooting title "Murakumo" has been available in Japan since spring, offers in **O•T•O•G•I** what could be described as the first truly original and complete action title of this generation of gaming. Although the core of the game, from its haunting music to its use of old-skool *kanji* (Chinese characters) and all-around samurai motif, borrows heavily from dated Japanese myth and literature, all of this is complemented with unbelievably detailed graphics and fluid animation, brilliant environment and character design, and some of the most intense and exhilarating gameplay seen on a console. Zooming on the ground and in the air as you cut a swath through the enemy creatures placed before you, complete with multiple combo possibilities and a 360°

playing field, instills the kind of excitement felt by a giddy kid who has only dreamed of being capable of such things but had never found a means of facilitating the experience. A good deal of the aforementioned exhilaration is provided by the game's almost completely destructible environment — slice through trees, lanterns, pagodas, stones, barrels — whatever stands in your way. Smashing whatever you cut apart into your enemies as an offensive weapon is just one of the creative elements offered by **O•T•O•G•I**'s gameplay.

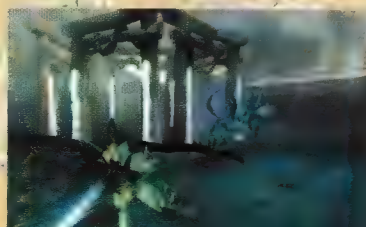
Speaking of gameplay, while this title does fall into the Action/RPG category, the emphasis throughout is without a doubt on the Action half. During intervals between controlling the main character, the resurrected samurai Raiko, through the game's numerous stages in order to fulfill the objectives instructed to him by his spiritual guide *Yamotsuhirasakabime* in this dark and fantastical world, you will be given the opportunity to upgrade Raiko's offensive, defensive and magical abilities through purchasing new weapons, magic and accessories in a shop. What you can purchase and use is dependent on the spiritual and experience points acquired throughout the action sequences. This strategic RPG element offered by **O•T•O•G•I** succeeds in giving the title both freshness and variety, ensuring that you'll be enjoying it for a long time. The ability to replay completed stages in order to both hone your skills and heighten your skill parameters is an extremely welcome feature, and one that screams RPG through and through. Rarely do I go out of my way to replay parts

of a game that I've already blown through, but **O•T•O•G•I** has suckered me into logging several hours in completed stages alone just to upgrade Raiko and enjoy the sheer fun offered by the varied scenarios presented throughout the game.

Fun — that's what really counts in the end, doesn't it? It is really the entertainment value of **O•T•O•G•I** that keeps me coming back for more, as its combination of tight controls, fabulous aesthetics, hardcore action and variety provide a truly complete gaming experience. On top of that, a title this imbued with a sense of *wa* (Japanese style) has been sorely missing since the "Samurai Spirits" ("Samurai Shodown" in the West) series on the Neo-Geo — and I think you'll all agree with me that that was a while ago.

Objective shortcomings? Well, it's hard to be objective at this point. But to be fair, the camera utilized in the game, while fully controllable, does become disorienting at times, particularly because you will often find yourself attacked from all sides. However, this is a minor complaint when everything else positive about this offering is taken into consideration (Has there ever been a perfect camera system in a 3-D title up to this point?), and shouldn't detract anyone fortunate to own an Xbox to pick this title up — yet another in a string of recent high-quality games that should put the platform on the more competitive ground in Japan that it has rightfully earned.

Written by SHOU





# QB and VIVI's OTAKU 缶

ACT  
10

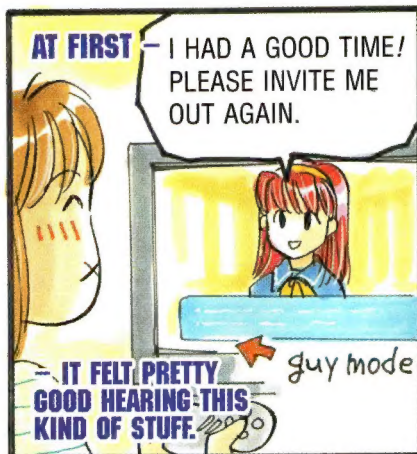
SO - WHAT'S YOUR  
TAKE ON GAL GAMES?  
BY KYUBI TAKAKO



QB HERE.  
ADMITTEDLY, THE ONLY  
SO-CALLED GAL GAME  
I'VE EVER PLAYED IS  
"TOKIMEKI MEMORIAL."

"TOKIMEMO"\* IS  
THE MOTHER OF  
THEM ALL, THOUGH.

\*"TOKIMEMO" IS THE CASUAL ABBREVIATION OFTEN USED FOR "TOKIMEKI MEMORIAL."



AT FIRST - I HAD A GOOD TIME!  
PLEASE INVITE ME  
OUT AGAIN.

IT FELT PRETTY  
GOOD HEARING THIS  
KIND OF STUFF.

guy mode



BUT EVENTUALLY, YOU END UP  
MEETING WAY TOO MANY GIRLS.

IT BECOMES TOO  
DAMN HARD TO KEEP  
TRACK OF ALL YOUR  
DATES!

PLUS, IF YOU DON'T PAY  
THEM ATTENTION, THEY  
GET ALL PISSED OFF.



IN THE END, JUST LIKE IN REAL  
LIFE, DEALING WITH PEOPLE MADE  
ME EXHAUSTED -

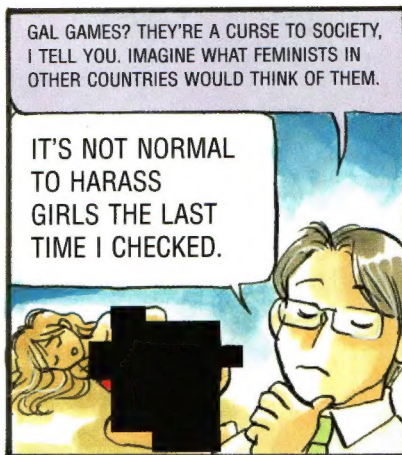
C'MON, DON'T MAKE  
THAT FACE AT ME,  
PLEASE...

- AND I NEVER TOUCHED THE GAME AGAIN.



WHEN I ASKED MY FRIENDS  
WHAT THEY THOUGHT ABOUT GAL  
GAMES, THIS IS WHAT I GOT.

TOO FUN!  
PLUS, THEY GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF  
WHAT KINDS OF CHARACTERS ARE  
POPULAR THESE DAYS.



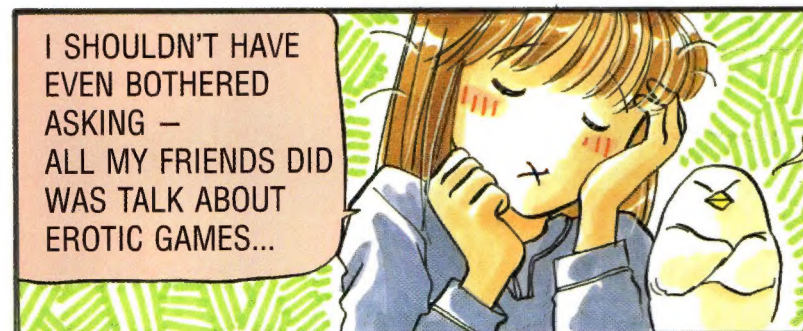
GAL GAMES? THEY'RE A CURSE TO SOCIETY,  
I TELL YOU. IMAGINE WHAT FEMINISTS IN  
OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD THINK OF THEM.

IT'S NOT NORMAL  
TO HARASS  
GIRLS THE LAST  
TIME I CHECKED.



GAL GAMES RULE!  
I MEAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH  
BITCHY GIRLS, THERE'S NO HAIR IN ODD  
PLACES OR BAD SMELL TO DEAL WITH...

WHO NEEDS A GIRLFRIEND  
WHEN YOU'VE GOT GAL  
GAMES?



I SHOULDN'T HAVE  
EVEN BOTHERED  
ASKING -  
ALL MY FRIENDS DID  
WAS TALK ABOUT  
EROTIC GAMES...

WELL, IT'S KINDA HARD TO TALK  
ABOUT GAL GAMES WITHOUT  
HENTAI COMING UP -  
ALTHOUGH THEY ARE A BIT  
DIFFERENT.

OF COURSE, HENTAI IS  
SOMETHING WE CAN'T GET INTO  
\*TOO\* MUCH DETAIL ABOUT IN  
THIS MAG...



# NEXT ISSUE PREVIEW

Touched upon within the first part of our recent Special Feature on *Akiba*, dolls represent more than just simple display pieces. Largely centered on models of the female body and characterized by an incredibly fine level of detail, dolls are a cherished existence to the hardcore *otaku* that maintain them. Read about a representative product of this genre, Super Dollfy, and Volks, the company behind it, in Issue #12 of RGA!

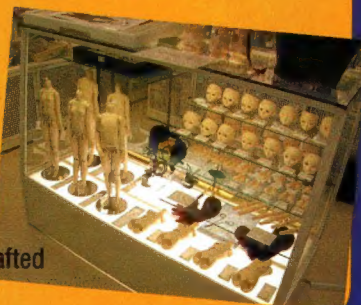
## SPECIAL FEATURE

### Dolls: Super Dollfie & Co.

Although dolls such as Super Dollfie begin with a basic human frame, a careful and deliberate choice of parts, paints and accessories —



— can produce a finely-crafted masterpiece such as this.



## REGULAR ARTICLES

Anime Focus  
**MAHOROMATIC:**  
more beautiful thing



Game Focus  
**MR. DRILLER  
DRILL LAND**



SEGA OF AMERICA  
**HEDGEHOG EXPRESS**  
Altered Beast:  
Guardian of the Realms

...and more!!



ISSUE #12

**甘納豆 Amanatto** NO.0000011 You Figured Wrong 漫画: com

Well, here I am with my boy again, out hunting for figures —

Man, all those casual noOb shoppers buying those small, chintzy figures — they don't know what's up. If you're gonna do it, you gotta flex a little cash and do it right by going with the life-size dolls! And I'm goin' all out today!

Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh/

... You know, maybe I took it a little too far this time— This is just too damn creepy —



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And then RAIJIN COMICS arrived...

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She said she wanted to put up both

Kenshiro and Baki posters, so she went out to buy another issue...

I'm gonna put up Baki!!

I'm gonna put up Kenshiro!

Kenshiro or Baki...

Hmm.

TO BE CONTINUED

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